

*Encountering God, Others and the World*

# Digging in



THE PRINCE OF PEACE

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A daily devotional helping you  
prepare for the coming message.



THIS WEEK'S DEVOTIONAL IS NOT TIED TO THE UPCOMING SERMON.

## MONDAY:

FOR A CHILD IS BORN TO US, A SON IS GIVEN TO US. THE GOVERNMENT WILL REST ON HIS SHOULDERS. AND HE WILL BE CALLED: WONDERFUL COUNSELOR, MIGHTY GOD, EVERLASTING FATHER, **PRINCE OF PEACE**. (ISAIAH 9:6, NLT, EMPHASIS MINE)

What thoughts do “*the holidays*” conjure up in your mind? Family gatherings, shopping lists, extended family plans, schedules to coordinate, depleted bank accounts, no parking spaces, office parties, long lines, or what about road rage? It’s a fact that this holiday season can bring out the worst in each of us and our focus can easily be thrust in areas God never intended for us to stopover.

It seems the harder I try to cut out life’s demands at this time of the year, more items surface threatening to topple my teetering pile. This week, I took out my calendar and took stock. There were many things I wanted to do, but I knew they would only heap on unwanted stress. I got out my eraser and whiteout and went to work deleting items from my full schedule. After all, the celebration of this season was never meant to be stressful, but full of peace and joy.

When God gave us the greatest gift of His son to be born so He could later die for us, our bursting schedules and financial strains weren’t what He had in mind for remembering His precious gift. Jesus came to the earth in a rather nondescript manner – in a barn, laid in a feeding trough with nearby animals. His arrival wasn’t poor timing on God’s part, or a failure to attend to details to make sure a room was available in a nearby inn. It was intentional.

Jesus didn’t need fanfare to make Him magnificent. He didn’t need the best of circumstances to make His future bright. He was the Messiah. He just was. His name and who He is, gives all the fanfare needed—Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Who needs perfect circumstances with an arrival of such a King?

This week, we will focus our hearts on the peace God desires to give us in the midst of this busy holiday season. The words “holidays” and “peace” in the same sentence sound like an oxymoron, but only with God can the two exist together. Peace through the holidays doesn’t take special circumstances, it doesn’t require perfect families, or even hefty bank accounts—just the knowledge and acceptance of the Prince of Peace in our lives.

READ LUKE 2:1-7.

- ◇ Think about the names of Jesus: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. Journal about the name and characteristics of Jesus that brings you the most comfort in your circumstances today.
- ◇ Get out your calendar and an eraser or white-out. Remove what can be rescheduled or deleted. Then schedule in time for God this week.

REMEMBER, IN ORDER TO FOCUS ON THE PEACE GOD PROVIDES, WE MUST CARVE OUT TIME TO FIX OUR EYES ON HIM.



## TUESDAY:

AND HE WILL BE THE SOURCE OF PEACE. (MICAH 5:5A, NLT)

"I pinky promise," my daughter used to say. She held out her little pinky finger and waited for me to interlock hers with mine. To her, this sign meant how serious she was about her promise.

God made a promise too, but His words were enough. No interlocking pinkies needed here. Hundreds of years before Jesus' birth, God promised to provide a new King that would save the people—an eternal King. At the right time, God fulfilled His promise when He sent His son to be born. Jesus was to be the *source of peace*.

What sticks out to me is that God's promise wasn't conditional. It didn't depend on right behavior. Clearly the people of Israel were busy doing their own thing and their hearts were far from God. It also didn't depend on the people's religious motivation. They were consumed by money, influence, and selfish gain. God hated the actions of the people of Israel, but deeply loved the people themselves.

Out of an unconditional love for each one of us, God's kept His promise of sending the Messiah. What amazing love!! God is not a judgmental giant waiting to pounce when we make a wrong choice. Our wrong decisions, messed up motivations, and self-seeking ambitions disappoint God, but cannot remove His love for us. The gift of God's unconditional love came in the fulfilled promise of the birth of our Savior.

Do we take time to embrace God's peace or receive His love? Do we rush pass the profound meaning of His everlasting peace?

The Bible is full of examples of God's promises. Peace comes in knowing we can trust God will keep His word.

READ ECCLESIASTES 5:1-7

- ◇ What commitments do you need to make to God today?
- ◇ What holds you up from receiving God's peace and unconditional love?



## WEDNESDAY:

WHEN THE ANGELS HAD RETURNED TO HEAVEN, THE SHEPHERDS SAID TO EACH OTHER,  
“LET’S GO TO BETHLEHEM! LET’S SEE THIS THING THAT HAS HAPPENED, WHICH  
THE LORD HAS TOLD US ABOUT.” (LUKE 2:15, NLT)

Have you ever waited for something for so long that by the time it arrived, you could hardly contain yourself? Just watch a child on Christmas morning. They have spent weeks in anticipation, waiting, and wondering what presents under the tree are. The time finally comes. The presents are placed in their lap and like a puppy eager for its morning meal, they tear into them with excitement and wonderment. I love the enthusiasm of children on Christmas morning.

The shepherds experienced this feeling. Generations waited ages for the Messiah to come. Finally, the day arrived. The announcement came to the shepherds in a field as they tended their sheep. An angel appeared and delivered the exciting news—the Savior was born! Then the heavens broke out in praise to God. The shepherds immediately responded. They got up and traveled to see for themselves this promised Prince of Peace. In their lifetime, the Messiah came and they couldn’t waste one minute. They *hurried* to see Jesus.

When did we last hurry to spend time with God? When did we last tear into the Bible anxious to learn more about our Savior? The birth of Jesus wasn’t just an event some 2,000 years ago that is inapplicable to our lives today. Jesus lived, healed, taught, died, and rose again for us so that we can have life. Just as the shepherds responded by seeking Jesus, it is up to us to seek and find him as well. When we do, all the excitement and wonderment appear as the peace of God intersects our lives.

Don’t let this season go by without renewing your zeal and search for the Savior.

READ LUKE 2:8-20

- ◇ How would you describe your personal relationship with Jesus — close, distant, 9-1-1 emergency only, or hit and miss? Why?
- ◇ Do you find it hard to *continually* seek Him? If so, what steps do you need to take to make this holiday season different?



## THURSDAY:

I AM LEAVING YOU WITH A GIFT—PEACE OF MIND AND HEART. AND THE PEACE I GIVE IS A GIFT THE WORLD CANNOT GIVE. SO DON'T BE TROUBLED OR AFRAID. (JOHN 14:27, NLT)

Three years ago, we lost our beloved black lab, Molly. Our daughter would embrace her like a sibling and a best friend. Molly endured play dates of dress-up complete with clothes and bike helmets, along with express train and horsey rides. The time came for us to put Molly to sleep. The first night was grueling for our daughter.

“I can’t go to sleep without Molly here,” she said. We prayed with her and asked Jesus to bring her comfort. But nothing would change her mind—without Molly, peace and comfort vanished.

“Jesus wants to show you His comfort, Sweetheart,” we told her.

“Isn’t my way good?” she tenderly asked.

“Jesus is an even better way.”

I stayed with her that night until she fell asleep. Even though the next night went better, she felt sadness during the day and asked us to buy her a present to take away her sadness. But the reality was, no *thing* could fill the void she felt. We knew, as parents, our job wasn’t to shield her from experiencing pain and sadness, but instead pointing her to the One who will be her peace and comfort in all areas of her life.

God gave us a gift of peace that only He can give. We can’t shop around for a better deal—there is no other substitute. God’s peace isn’t dependent on the absence of conflict, nor does it rely on positive thinking. His peace is separate from all circumstances. It comes from knowing that He is in control of all things and the understanding and acceptance that He deeply loves and cares for us. Such peace should bring us comfort in our darkest days. We need not worry, be troubled, or fearful because we are not alone. He promises to always be with us.

Jesus gives everlasting peace and comfort that never fails!

READ PHILIPPIANS 4:6-9.

- ◇ Write down some of your worries, fears, unresolved conflicts, and things that make you sad.
- ◇ Spend some time in prayer. Imagine yourself leaving these things at the feet of Jesus. Rather than pick them back up, take time to soak in the truth that God is in control and He cares for each situation you placed before Him. Allow yourself to accept the peace God desires to give you today.



## **FRIDAY:**

I'VE TOLD YOU ALL THIS SO THAT TRUSTING ME, YOU WILL BE UNSHAKABLE AND ASSURED, DEEPLY AT PEACE.  
IN THIS GODLESS WORLD YOU WILL CONTINUE TO EXPERIENCE DIFFICULTIES.  
BUT TAKE HEART! I'VE CONQUERED THE WORLD. (JOHN 16:33, THE MESSAGE)

In our human nature, we desire to see things come to a resolution, watch the good guy win, see truth prevail, be assured our financial portfolios will grow, and guaranteed the Broncos will win the Super Bowl every year. ☺ Unfortunately, life on this earth does not work that way. Conflicts escalate. The good guy often gets trampled. Truth is watered down and security in financial portfolios breeds a shaky foundation on which to build a house.

If life was carefree and effortless, we would not need God. If everything went according to our plans, we would be individual self-sufficient gods. Difficulty, even though painful, brings about character development. I'm sure some of you are saying, "I'm quite the character then!" We feel that way sometimes, don't we?

Jesus didn't assure the disciples that life would be difficulty-free. Instead, he assured them they *would* continue to experience difficulties. We live in a Godless world—a world where sin abounds. Where is peace in such a statement? Because that is not the end of the story. We already know the outcome—God is victorious. He conquered the world!! Contrary to the sport of football where no one knows who will win the Super Bowl, it's a done deal from the beginning with God. He's the victor!

So why then are problems and trials necessary? It is in the difficulties that our true character shines. Trials uncover where our devotion rests while troubles expose our default source of peace. Difficulties are opportunities for growth and steps to bring us closer to God.

Whatever you encounter this holiday season, know that God is waiting to shower you with His everlasting peace.

READ ROMANS 5:1-5

- ◇ Write down a situation you are dealing with where you do not feel God's peace.
- ◇ In thinking about this week's devotions, what would you say is your biggest hindrance in receiving God's peace regardless of this situation?